

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AS A U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TOOL

Study of the primary motivations for and effectiveness of the United States Embassy in Helsinki youth programs

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International Business

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Diya Das, Ph.D.

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Title of thesis: Youth Engagement as a U.S. Public Diplomacy Tool – Study of the primary motivations for and effectiveness of the United States Embassy in Helsinki youth programs

Date: 10 April, 2017

Degree: Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business Administration

Supervisor: Diya Das, PhD

Objectives

The main objectives of this thesis research were to study the primary motivations for the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki to organize youth programs and examine the effectiveness of those programs in achieving public diplomacy objectives. In addition, the biggest benefits of youth engagement in intercultural exchange programs were studied.

Summary

Being a relatively new phenomenon in academic literature, the motivations for and effectiveness of U.S. Embassy provided youth programs have not yet been studied as comprehensively as other forms of public diplomacy. Based on the review of previous research, researchers hold multiple opinions upon the concept of public diplomacy. This thesis talks about public diplomacy from the United States point of view and what are the U.S. Embassy Helsinki's motivations for providing youth programs. To examine the primary motivations for and biggest benefits of youth engagement in youth programs, a set of representatives from the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki were interviewed. In addition, a survey was conducted for youth alumni who have participated in certain U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth programs. The research suggests that the role of youth engagement in public diplomacy is more significant than the lack of previous research indicates. The key findings suggested that the biggest benefits of youth engagement are commonly cultural understanding and experiencing way of life in a foreign country.

Conclusions

In addition to offering youth an experience of traveling to a foreign country, youth programs are a functional method for gaining and promoting mutual understanding between cultures and people. This thesis research shows that usually these youth programs cause a positive change in perceptions and preconditions about a foreign country. Moreover, it was found that the general objectives of youth programs are aligned with the central U.S. public diplomacy objectives – gaining mutual understanding and sharing experiences about the cultures and ways of life in the U.S.

Key words: *public diplomacy, youth engagement, youth programs, intercultural exchange, culture*

Language: English

Grade:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Being a relatively new phenomenon in academic literature, the motivations for and effectiveness of U.S. Government sponsored youth programs have not yet been studied as comprehensively as other forms of public diplomacy. The concept of public diplomacy is rather complex and relatively controversial. There are certainly a lot of different definitions for public diplomacy in academic literature. The definitions also vary by countries. A general conception is that public diplomacy is somehow related to nation branding and reputation, and that countries use certain methods for communicating their brand to foreign publics. This thesis, however, talks about public diplomacy from the United States point of view and what is specifically the U.S. Embassy Helsinki's motivation to organize youth programs, and whether those youth programs are effective means to achieve U.S. public diplomacy objectives.

1.2. The Research Problem

Being a fairly new phenomenon in academic research, the effectiveness of educational youth programs as a public diplomacy tool have not yet been studied comprehensively. The research problem is, whether the youth engagement programs provided by the United States Embassy in Helsinki are effective in reaching the objectives of United States public diplomacy. The general assumption is that youth programs sponsored by the U.S. government are provided in order to achieve some specific objectives in public diplomacy. Some studies recognize educational exchange programs as a strategy in reaching the objectives of public diplomacy (Zatepilina, 2010). However, the effectiveness in reaching the objectives is not likely to have been researched in academic literature, at least in majority of the preceding researches. In addition, the role of youth programs as a part of an overall public diplomacy strategy is still relatively unknown in literature.

Moreover, the importance of this research lies on how people's opinions and attitudes are shifting overtime as the world changes, e.g. due to globalization. The young generations today have constantly evolving perspectives and opinions about cultures, diversity, and democracy to what earlier generations have had. As these changes occur, they should be reflected to the consistency and effectiveness of the youth programs. Therefore, this paper also compares the U.S. Embassy Helsinki provided youth program youth alumni's current perceptions on the effectiveness of the youth programs and alumni activities with the expectations of the Embassy. This research also provides recommendations for improvement, regardless of how effective the youth engagement activities are found to be.

1.3. Research Objectives

This research will provide insights on:

1. Whether the youth programs provided by the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki are effective ways to share knowledge about the United States, i.e. how effective of a public diplomacy tool youth engagement is.
2. The ways in which those programs are effective or not. This research includes research methods (interview and survey) which aim to study this matter by comparing the results.
3. Whether there is a relationship between some factors e.g. before and after the program and what causes this.
4. What the possible ineffective areas are.

This research also aims to find out what particular activities, tools, or methods of communication about the youth programs or alumni activities are possibly found ineffective and how they could be improved in the future.

The main objectives of this thesis research were to study the primary motivations for the U.S Embassy in Helsinki to organize youth programs and examine the effectiveness of those programs in achieving public diplomacy objectives. In addition, the biggest benefits of youth engagement in intercultural exchange programs were studied. This thesis research aims to obtain new understanding on the topic with the

aid of research in the form of an interview and a survey, and to identify any gaps in current knowledge and literature as well as to recognize areas for future research. This thesis paper will also aim to provide the United States Embassy in Helsinki with insights on the ineffective areas or practices of the youth engagement through youth programs or alumni activities. In the best case, this thesis paper will provide the United States Embassy in Helsinki suggestions for improvement of youth programs or alumni activities they provide.

1.4. Research Questions

- What are the United States Embassy Helsinki's objectives for youth engagement in educational youth programs?
 - What are the objectives for youth alumni engagement in the Embassy's events and activities after the youth programs?
- Are the methods of communication about the youth programs or in alumni engagement found effective?
- Is youth engagement effective and beneficial in terms of the United States Embassy in Helsinki's objectives?
 - In what ways are the youth sharing their experiences about the youth programs? How are youth using the skills, connections or information and resources provided for them?
- Are the perceptions of the youth program participants aligned with the expectations of the Embassy?

1.5. Thesis Structure

This thesis paper consists of the following parts. In the literature review, the topic related literature is introduced and reviewed. In the end of the literature review, a conceptual framework that was developed based on the literature is introduced and explained. After the literature review, the methodology section introduces the data collection methods and process, and presents the participant profiles for the interview

and the survey. Following the methodology section, the research findings are presented and analyzed. Finally, the conclusions are presented. The conclusion consists of the main findings of this research and provides recommendations. Moreover, it presents the implications for international business, limitations of the study, and finally, suggests areas for further research.

1.6. Definitions

Public Diplomacy is communication to and from a nation and foreign publics. It is a practice that is usually used to manage a country's reputation or increase understanding across foreign nations (Wang, 2006; Szondi, 2008; Zatepilina, 2010).

A *mission* is a "diplomatic representation to an international organization" (Diplomacy.state.gov., 2017).

An *Embassy* is a mission in a foreign country committing duties and serving their country's citizens according to the country's interests (Diplomacy.state.gov., 2017).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction to Literature Review

Being a relatively new phenomenon in academic literature, the motivations for and effectiveness of U.S. Government sponsored youth programs have not been studied as thoroughly as other forms of public diplomacy. According to several researchers, the concept of public diplomacy is rather complex and relatively controversial. There are certainly a lot of different definitions for public diplomacy, which are highly varying in different countries. A general conception is that public diplomacy is somehow related to nation branding activities, and that countries use certain methods for communicating their brand to foreign publics. Indeed, for example Anholt (2005) argues that the success of public diplomacy is measured by finding out how foreign publics assess a nation brand.

This literature review, however, talks about public diplomacy from the United States point of view and discusses what are generally the motivations for organizing youth programs, and whether youth programs can be seen as an effective tool for achieving public diplomacy objectives.

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a critical analysis of a number of published sources and academic literature on the thesis topic, in order to form a background and a frame for the research. The topics covered include:

1. Public diplomacy
 - a. the work and objectives of foreign missions
 - b. youth engagement and cultural exchanges as a form of public diplomacy
 - c. nation image communication in academic literature
 - i. the distinction between nation branding and public diplomacy
2. Objectives of youth engagement
 - a. exchange programs and other educational youth programs

This literature review is going to identify the current state of knowledge on the topics above. Any gaps in literature regarding the thesis topic will be identified as well as any theories supporting or competing the research objectives. The sources used in this literature review vary from scholarly articles to government websites and books. The

review includes a relatively extensive amount of sources, even though the academic literature on the topic is rather limited.

The discussion in this literature review unfolds in three steps. First part discusses some of the important concepts in public diplomacy and identifies youth engagement and cultural exchanges as forms of public diplomacy. The second part discusses more comprehensively the objectives of youth engagement and of educational exchange programs. Finally, the review concludes with summarizing the findings from the literature. Moreover, a conceptual framework is presented.

2.2. Public Diplomacy

Youth programs offered by the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki are considered a form of public diplomacy. Although the youth programs are the focus in this thesis, the big picture and the concept of public diplomacy are important to be first well-defined. Before opening the discussion on the literature in the focus area of the thesis, some fundamental understanding of some central concepts is necessary.

2.2.1. Public Diplomacy and the Objectives

Public Diplomacy is communication to and from a nation and foreign publics (Szondi, 2008). The aim is to inform and influence, thus to gain a better understanding and dialogue of the country among citizens in foreign nations. Increasing awareness of the country can help in building a positive reputation (Wang, 2006; Szondi, 2008 & Zatepilina, 2010). Zatepilina (2010) and Sevin (2014) say that some researches even propose one of public diplomacy's main strategic objectives being to form and shape a positive public opinion. This view can be and is challenged later on in this paper in the section 2.2.3, "Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding", where it is discussed how different countries have varying approaches to the strategic objectives of public diplomacy.

The main concern in the U.S. public diplomacy is to work aligned with national interests

in achieving the United States foreign policy goals by for example strengthening the relationships between America and Americans with the rest of the world (State.gov, 2017b). As also Zatepilina (2010) finds, with the aid of public diplomacy, the understanding of the traditions and values of countries are enhanced among people in foreign nations. Indeed, according to several sources, profound understanding of the traditions, customs, and values can be likely to lead to an improved dialogue and an ability to critically analyze information about a foreign country.

The concept of public diplomacy is very broad and complex, and some researchers see that there is still no agreement upon its definition (Szondi, 2008; Sevin, 2014; Sevin, 2015). The concept will therefore be described only briefly in this paper in order to form some fundamental understanding on its different aspects. Zatepilina (2010) describes some aspects to the concept defined by many other researchers – for instance, the objectives, strategies or tactics of public diplomacy. As objectives for public diplomacy, this literature review addresses especially positive image and reputation management and relationship building with foreign publics. As some of the strategies or tactics are identified “cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges” (Zatepilina, 2010: 23-24). According to this view it can be indicated that the educational exchanges and other youth programs studied in this literature review are a *strategy*, a means of reaching the *objective* of a positive image among foreign publics.

2.2.2. A Foreign Mission and Activities and Objectives

A country’s foreign missions work towards the public diplomacy objectives exercising numerous strategies in the processes. An embassy is a mission, a “diplomatic representation to an international organization” (Diplomacy.state.gov., 2017) comprising of an ambassador and diplomatic staff who are sent to represent their own country within a foreign nation’s government. An embassy comprises of many agencies, and is the center of the country’s diplomatic affairs within another nation’s borders (Diplomacy.state.gov., 2017; U.S. Department of State, 2017).

Commonly, all foreign diplomatic missions have the same framework of rules defined by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) for the diplomatic relations

between countries and the duties of the missions (Formin.fi, 2016; International.gc.ca, 2017). The embassies, or *consulates*, which is a part of the main embassy usually situated in another city, primarily represent and work toward advancing the interests of their own country. The duties of embassies that are typically most noticeable or visible for the public are issuing visas or assisting and protecting the country's citizens in another country.

Other important functions for embassies are, among others, interacting with the host country's government, local businesses and organizations, and educational institutions. These functions can be proposed to be some of the strategies or tactics used in the work. The aim of these functions, as previously explained, is to create positive reactions for the U.S. and its policies, among all of those institutions and citizens, and to improve the public's overall knowledge about the United States (Diplomacy.state.gov., 2017; U.S. Department of State, 2017). Furthermore, an important aspect as one part of the work in embassies is to raise awareness of the culture and history of their country to foreign publics, which tends to enhance the understanding and critical analysis of contemporary issues. Embassies for example can arrange events open for public, or they may visit for example schools to discuss and present for instance certain historical or current events.

One way for the U.S. embassies to raise awareness of their country is to promote "professional, educational and cultural exchanges" (Diplomacy.state.gov., 2017) for citizens in other countries. There are numerous different kinds of programs for foreign and also American citizens of different ages. The focus of this literature review and thesis overall, however, is on the cultural exchanges provided for youth from Finland. These cultural exchanges, will be discussed more thoroughly later on in this literature review, in the section 2.3.4.

2.2.3. Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding

In some occasions, nation branding is seen as a part of public diplomacy. Then again, many find it very important to distinct them as separate concepts. Due to the

controversial characteristic of this topic, the relationship of public diplomacy and nation branding is discussed in this chapter.

Some scholars identify nation branding as a component of public diplomacy in academic literature (Szondi, 2008; Kaneva, 2011). Kaneva (2011) suggests that researchers are ultimately divided into two based on their stances on the matter: one finds that there is a relationship between public diplomacy and nation branding, but still they are separate from each other (e.g. Szondi, 2008). The other part of researchers views the concepts as similar.

The need for countries to actively manage their image has been comprehensively recognized in academic literature (Dinnie et al., 2010). The competition of influence and power between countries globally is increasing, where the importance of nation branding comes in the picture. For this reason, for example Finland, aims at building a strong brand for the country, using “maakuvatyö” (nation branding). Nation branding includes daily strategic communication to the public, to influencers and policymakers of a foreign nation and building and forming long-lasting relationships and networks (Formin.fi, 2016). It is also discussed in the article of Kaneva (2011) that the global competition is what makes countries manage their reputations strategically, using either public diplomacy or nation branding as tools, in order to gain competitive advantage globally.

Nation branding is a growing field of interest in academic literature and there are multiple viewpoints and definitions to the concept. This is identified in several research articles, as for instance in the article of Szondi (2010). Zatepilina (2010) defines country image as the widespread opinions, perceptions and outlooks that the foreign public has about another country. Furthermore, the same article additionally states that some researchers argue nation branding being an act for improving their image in other countries. These researchers also claim that this may be done by means of advertising, public relations and even propaganda. This view is also supported by e.g. Szondi (2010). This, however, is found very controversial in academic literature, and, indeed, researchers hold fairly varying opinions to this matter.

A number of frameworks and reconceptualization have been proposed to measure nation brand (Szondi, 2010). The use of these frameworks support the view of public diplomacy as a strategic, planned action aiming to improve the country brand. One of those frameworks and perhaps most known globally, is the Simon Anholt's Nation Brand Index (Zatepilina, 2010). This index measures the power and influence of the brand image of the United States. The index studies the perceptions of foreign publics in many areas, for example in politics and culture (Anholt, 2005; Zatepilina, 2010). Anholt (2002) argued that public diplomacy objectives are successfully achieved when foreign publics assess a nation brand favorably and positively. Dinnie et al. (2010) see the relationship of nation branding and public diplomacy another way round. Their research states public diplomacy, in fact, being a function of nation branding. This only showcases that researchers hold multiple viewpoints to these concepts.

However, Zatepilina (2010) describes how it has been witnessed that the United States does not occupy resources on the country image building as excessively as some other countries, such as Britain, France or Germany, do. Nevertheless, the same article describes how some researchers, such as Anholt, still state a positive image or a favorable nation brand being some of the public diplomacy objectives for the country. From this can be interpreted, that perhaps the U.S. does not occupy resources for image building in such a large scale, since the countries Zatepilina (2010) mentions, or Finland, as discussed earlier in this section, are countries not as large as the United States. Thereby, a certain, specific, country image might be difficult to convey in the United States.

Based on the discussion in this section, a critical distinction should be made between public diplomacy and nation branding. They are two different concepts, although some countries seem to find nation branding more or less closely related to public diplomacy practices. Szondi (2008) argues nation branding being "one-way communication", whereas public diplomacy is communication to and from a nation and foreign publics. He also highlights that nation branding is more about competing and public diplomacy about mutual understanding. Thus, it can be interpreted that public diplomacy occurs as relationship building, promoting or supporting understanding between two or more entities, individuals or institutions. In contrast, nation branding is about trying to emphasize a certain picture and idea of a country among foreign publics. Szondi

(2010) describes this phenomenon as planned communication. Based on this literature, it may be suggested that nation branding is not always part of public diplomacy practices. Whether public diplomacy and nation branding are seen as related vary from country to country and factors such as the size of the country might be significant in determining the relationship.

2.2.4. Public Diplomacy and Relationship Building

As it was described previously in the section 2.2.2, one fundamental aspect of the work of foreign missions is to form a connection with the foreign citizens in the host country. In modern diplomacy it is increasingly important for foreign missions to be able to build and manage different networks, stakeholders and relationships (Formin.fi, 2016). By forming those networks, embassies are able to share information about their country, thus increasing a foreign public's interest towards the country in question, in this case the United States. As discussed in the previous section, 2.2.3, the objectives for cooperation with publics or building networks differ from country to country.

In order to meet the strategic objectives of the United States public diplomacy, the embassies engage with citizens and civil society organizations within a foreign nation's borders. One way to engage with citizens is to for example provide youth programs or other activities for youth.

The following larger section will focus on discussing youth engagement, forming networks and relationships with the young demographic by providing youth programs. Moreover, the objectives for providing youth programs and educational exchange programs will be discussed.

2.3. Youth Programs and Public Diplomacy

This section will discuss youth programs and youth engagement in general as a public diplomacy tool. The motivations for engaging a young demographic as well as

the importance of personal interest and connection formed with the youth programs and topics will now be discussed.

2.3.1. Motivations for Engaging Youth

This chapter talks about motivations for youth engagement, and especially focuses on why youth are seen as an important demographic to be engaged.

Youth are concerned to being acting as the agents for change in their communities (U.S. Department of State, 2016c). In the 2013 U.S. Department of State YouTube production “The Next Level of Diplomacy: Youth and Global Engagement” was discussed how many of the world’s most pressing problems could be resolved by the young demographic. The production provided reasons for this, such as the technological power available, which enables youth to connect with peers all around the globe through social media. This connection allows youth to share thoughts, and also allows foreign policy influencers to hear the youth voices from communities all around the world. The youth’s voice and leadership are important factors in promoting civic engagement and mutual understanding between communities around the world. One of the public diplomacy objectives was found being to improve understanding and knowledge about the United States. By using social media, youth are easily able to share their experiences about the country to their peers.

The importance of youth engagement is also recognized in academic literature. Many researchers argue that young people are at a stage in their lives where they are most receptive to civic engagement and open to new ideas, indeed due to their young age. For instance, Checkoway and Aldana (2013) see that youth are at the point in their lives where they are still searching for their social identities, and discovering their interests and views. This is why youth are more curiously exploring their social environments, and might be concerned about social issues in communities, for example equality (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). Therefore, it may be suggested that youth are at an age where they are still forming their perceptions and thus can be found to be more open-minded towards new ideas influencing the formation of their perceptions and own opinions. Civic engagement can prepare youth for leadership in

adult society (Flanagan et al., 2007; Checkoway & Aldana, 2013). Therefore, youth programs and youth engagement can contribute to young people's own development of ideas and actions in the larger communities in future. Wicks et al. (2013) find in their study that youth are especially familiarized with the usage of social media and have recognized the ease of using social media for sharing information with peers.

2.3.2. Personal Experience and Motivation

It is argued in the article of Zatepilina (2010) that the level of personal experience in foreign countries is an important part of the image building process about another country. This personal experience can be, for instance, traveling, or education about a foreign country. The personal experience will give the individuals more understanding of the culture, thus impacting their perceptions and outlooks. Thereby, for example cultural exchanges can be interpreted to be prone to increase the formation of a positive image of a country, by providing a personal experience to individuals.

Individuals are able to be motivated to participate and learn when authentic relationships are formed by the understanding of values and ideals of a certain organization, or a theme of an activity. Individuals tend to be more engaged when they value the ideals on an emotional level or have personal experiences regarding the engagement program or activity (About.Yfu.org., 2017). The best way to overcome preconceptions is to have a personal connection with a foreign country and its culture, for example by going on exchange (AFS.fi, 2017).

Dawes and Larson (2011) have studied the ways of how youth get engaged in organized youth programs. Their research suggested that for youth to benefit from programs, they need to form a personal connection with program activities, which was reported being a factor for youth to experience motivation and get engaged. In the same study, Dawes and Larson talk about a self-determination theory, which is about connecting personal goals and interests with the objectives of the youth program activities. "Youth reported developing a connection to 3 personal goals that linked the self with the activity: learning for the future, developing competence, and pursuing a purpose." (Dawes & Larson, 2011: 259). Here could be inducted that youth are able to

form a personal connection or motivation to be engaged, when they have an interest for the overall topic or theme of the youth activities or otherwise find the activities relevant and purposeful regarding their own interests.

2.3.3. Cultural Exchanges as a Public Diplomacy Tool

In academic literature, it is seen controversial whether cultural exchange programs are a part of public diplomacy or not. In her study Zatepilina (2010) suggests that some scholars consider it as part of it (e.g.: Richmond 2008), and some see it as a separate field. What most researchers, however, agree upon, is that the objective of cultural exchanges is to form steady and long-lasting relationships in order to build trust and enhance mutual understanding between cultures (Richmond, 2008; Zatepilina, 2010). Indeed, as many of these scholars suggest, cultural exchanges are an effective means of improving intercultural communication and understanding.

It is suggested in academic literature that in general, all countries and governments are aiming to promote their culture, language, and overall, to convey a positive image and understanding of the country (Richmond, 2008; Zatepilina, 2010). According to Richmond (2008) and Zatepilina (2010) the short-term, or immediate, objective of youth engagement is promoting mutual understanding, however, the long-term objective is to create a steadier political relationship between the countries.

2.3.4. The Objectives of Educational and International Youth Exchanges

The objective of educational, international exchange programs for youth are “designed to enhance mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and other nations” (Finland.usembassy.gov, 2017c). Intercultural youth exchanges have been provided by a variety of international exchange organizations already for several decades. One example of those organizations is Youth for Understanding (YFU), an international exchange organization providing programs for youth to familiarize themselves with a foreign country’s culture by living with a local host family for a certain amount of time.

The objectives of intercultural exchanges are to improve deeper toleration of cultures, values and traditions, and creating mutual acceptance and understanding among people from diverse cultures by broadening global perspectives about diversity. The objective of intercultural youth exchanges is summarized in the YFU slogan “What starts with a single person, over time, influences nations.” (About.yfu.org., 2017). As discussed previously, especially with the increasing use of social media, messages, perceptions, ideas and opinions are spreading globally more easily than before.

The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supports international educational exchange programs on a global scale. These programs are aiming to promote diplomacy, diversity, leadership education and research, and make a global impact (Eca.state.gov, 2017). The objectives of intercultural youth exchanges can be summarized with the following citation:

-- oversees efforts to empower young people as economic and civic actors through U.S. programs, encourage governments to respond to youth through U.S. diplomacy, and directly engage young people around the world.”

(State.gov., 2017a: Global youth issues).

The Department of State has also recognized the relevance and potential of alumni engagement possibilities. The International Exchange Alumni community provides youth alumni of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs with a dynamic and interactive networking platform online, for the youth to exchange ideas, and build on the exchange experience (Alumni.state.gov., 2017b: A global community).

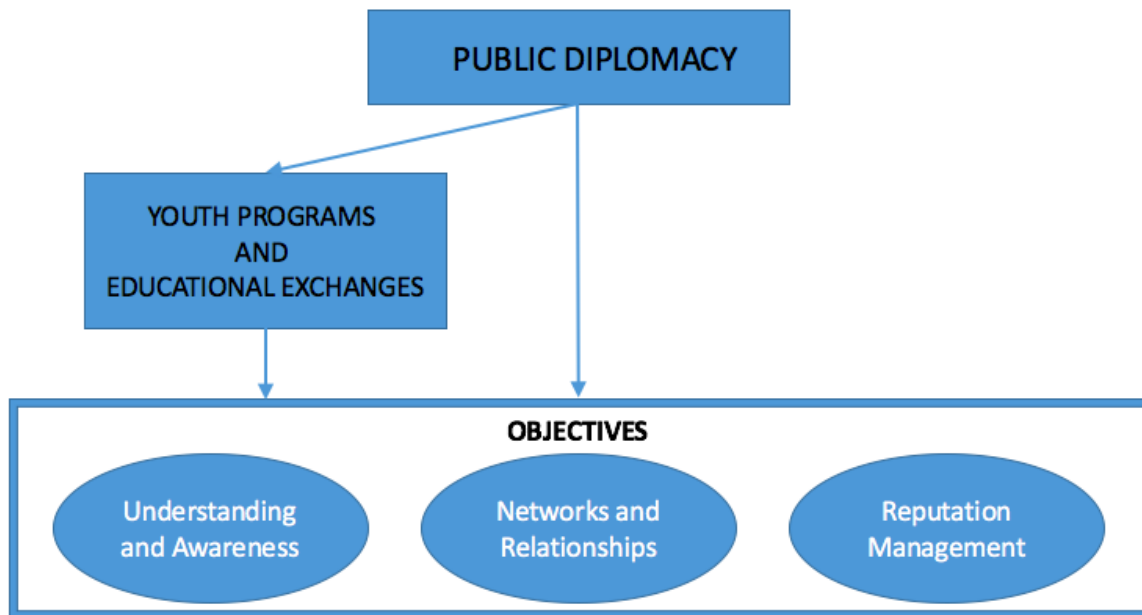
2.3. Conclusion and the Conceptual Framework

As the findings in this literature review show, the objectives of youth programs and educational exchange programs seem to be aligned with the overall objectives of public diplomacy. Thus, it may be suggested that intercultural exchange programs can be an important and relevant strategy in reaching public diplomacy objectives. Based on the literature reviewed, the main objectives of public diplomacy can be interpreted being reputation management, relationship building, and promoting understanding by

raising awareness about the country. Based on the literature, this is the general conception on the objectives, but it varies from country to country.

However, the literature available is quite limited. In the light of the literature on public diplomacy and youth engagement available, it can be seen that there is a gap in academic literature on the effectiveness of youth programs as a public diplomacy tool. This thesis paper aims at starting a discussion in academic literature in order to fill the gap. This literature provides a frame and background for the following research in this thesis paper, which explores the effectiveness of the youth programs provided by the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki in reaching public diplomacy objectives.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Design

Given that studies and literature on the effectiveness of youth programs as a tool for achieving public diplomacy objectives are still quite scarce, qualitative interview and survey with some quantitative data were used as the primary data collection methods in this thesis. An exploratory approach to the motivations, objectives, benefits and effectiveness of youth engagement with programs and activities aims to offer data that can form base for future research on the topic. The following chapters present background for the data collection methods and the interviewee and survey participant profiles.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview and an online survey were used as the primary data collection methods in this thesis. These research methods were selected for their consistency with the research objectives.

An interview was conducted face-to-face with a set of representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki in January 2017. The interview was conducted in English and lasted for approximately 40 minutes. The interview was recorded confidentially for the use of the interviewer in order to facilitate the analysis of question specific answers.

By using a semi-structured, qualitative interview, the discussion with the interviewees was guided with and focused on some key topics, but allowed to also keep the discussion open. This research method allowed to create deeper discussion in the areas chosen and offer real life examples on the work with youth programs. The questions designed for the interview are shown in appendix 1. For the open character of the interview, all questions were not presented as they were designed, but acted as guiding topics for the discussion. The interview allowed to find out the embassy's objectives in youth engagement and to hear what the interviewees' perceptions on the

effectiveness of the programs are. The interview proceeded mostly in the order of the guiding questions and open discussion, minimizing the role of the interviewer.

An online survey, designed with Webropol surveys, was conducted in February and March 2017. The target group for the survey was the youth alumni of the following U.S. Embassy Helsinki provided youth programs:

Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute
Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders from Europe
Young Ambassadors Summer Exchange Program
The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge

These youth programs and their alumni were selected as the participants in the survey, for the consistency of these youth programs with the research objectives of this thesis. The youth programs will be presented more in detail in the section 3.3. "Participant Profile".

The aim of the survey was to find out the youth alumni perceptions, attitudes, and expectations on the youth programs and alumni activities. The survey provided both quantitative and qualitative data on the perceptions and experiences of the youth alumni who had participated in U.S. Embassy Helsinki provided youth programs. For the most part the questionnaire consisted of multiple choice questions. The survey was conducted in English, since it was assumed that the target population has fluent English language skills, which is also one of the important requirements of participating in each of those youth programs. The survey was open for the participants for ten days. The questions were Likert Scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, or a scale from very good to very bad for questions such as those about the youth perceptions. Open-ended questions provided qualitative data, which were partly mandatory to answer. Those open-ended questions that were voluntary, gave the survey participants a chance to elaborate on a quantitative question on why they picked a certain choice on a scale. Some voluntary open-ended questions also provided a chance to give additional feedback, for example on the alumni engagement or communicating about the youth programs to a wider audience. Some of the questions

were multiple choice and provided the respondents with a chance to pick various options that applied to their own experiences.

The interview and survey questions were formed based on the research questions of this thesis. The interview and survey description are presented in the section 4. Copies of the interview questions and the survey questionnaire are available in the appendices 1 and 2.

In the data analysis part, the interview was analyzed by referring to the interviewees' answers or by citing them. The key findings of the thesis interview were reflected to the findings of the previous research in the literature review. In addition, the key findings of the survey questionnaire were reflected to both the literature review and the interview. The main objective was to compare the expectations for the effectiveness of the youth programs and the youth alumni perceptions. The study findings from the interview and the survey were compared and any new information found was stated. After comparing the main findings conclusions were presented and explained.

3.3. Participant Profile

3.3.1. Interview

Embassy of the United States of America, Helsinki, Finland

The interview was conducted with representatives from the U.S. Embassy Helsinki's Public Affairs Section in January 2017. The Public Affairs Section works with youth programs, exchange programs and alumni outreach, among other things.

3.3.2. Survey

The survey was targeted to U.S. Embassy Helsinki provided youth program alumni in four selected programs. The four youth programs to focus on were selected based on two criteria: they are programs for youth aged 13-25 years and they all aim to be educational in terms of cultural understanding, leadership, and community

involvement. They also aim to raise awareness and share knowledge and information about the United States. All of these youth programs also have differences, even though they all carry certain objectives. For example, three of the programs are taking the students to the United States, but one of the programs, the Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge, is for the most part held in Finland. All these programs utilize various forms of youth engagement, for example by facilitating interaction between youth, or giving youth a chance to be involved in the program delivery by presenting their entrepreneurial business ideas. Short descriptions of the programs will now be provided.

Young Ambassadors Summer Exchange Program

The Young Ambassadors Summer Exchange Program was provided in the years 2011-2015 for youth aged 16-17 of Finnish citizenship. The program took around 15 participants selected from all over Finland each year to participate the 6-week program in the States in summertime. The program consisted of visits to government institutions and green technology organizations. (Finland.usembassy.gov., 2017d).

Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute

The four-week Summer Institute takes participants aged 16-18 in North Carolina to learn and discuss global issues. The participants come from both Europe and the United States, which is aimed to improve relationships with European and American youth. (Finland.usembassy.gov., 2017b).

Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI) for Student Leaders from Europe

Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders from Europe is a five-week academic program for undergraduate students aged 18-25 held in two universities in the States. The program aims at providing its participants with knowledge of the United States and

leadership skills by offering classroom activities and voluntary work in the community. (Finland.usembassy.gov., 2017e).

The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge

The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge is a program based in Finland, challenging students aged 13-20 years to create an idea and execute it. The program aims at providing youth with coaching and guidance with their ideas. The winners of the challenge with the best idea get to travel to the States for a summer immersion program. (Finland.usembassy.gov., 2017a).

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section the interview and survey findings will be presented and analyzed in detail. This section will start with providing a description of the interview format, after which the interview discussion will be presented and examined. The interview discussion findings are divided into three main sections: objectives and motivations for youth engagement, channels for communicating about the youth programs, and finally, youth programs and youth engagement as a public diplomacy tool.

The interview description will be followed by the survey description. The section is divided into the following parts: demographics and background, perceptions, learning, sharing experiences, and communication and alumni engagement. Finally, some feedback from the respondents about the youth programs is brought up, as well as conclusions. The section will start with descriptive statistics on the demographics and background, in order to form basis for the parts of analysis related to demographics.

4.1. Interview Description

A semi-structured interview was conducted in order to gain qualitative data about youth engagement motivations and objectives from the Embassy's point of view. An interview questionnaire was used in the interview to direct the discussion. The discussion was open and the flow was very natural with the questions only guiding it. The interview questionnaire was divided into three main sections, all of them including smaller parts. First interviewees were asked to open up on their conceptions on motivations for providing youth programs. The second part focused on discussing the methods and channels of communicating about youth programs. Finally, the effectiveness of youth programs as a public diplomacy tool as well as some closing questions were discussed. In the interview description, the interviewees will be addressed by "Diplomat 1" and "Diplomat 2" in order to ensure anonymity. A copy of the interview questionnaire is included in the appendix 1.

4.1.1. Motivations and objectives for Youth Engagement

The following discussion will unfold in two parts: motivations for providing youth programs, and motivations for engaging a young demographic.

Interview participants' conceptions on the motivations and objectives for providing youth programs

According to the interviewees, there are various motivations for providing youth programs. All of the four youth programs studied in this thesis have different kind of objectives, which differ according to the character of the programs. For example, one of the programs focuses strongly on the homestay with host families in the U.S., and another program focuses on workshops and lectures at a university campus. However, all of the four youth programs have common main objectives. According to the interviewees, one of the major motivations to offer youth programs is to provide the participants with “the real American experience”.

Diplomat 2:

Participants will get to go to various DC establishments, they can go to the White House, to the Department of state and Capitol Hill, and Smithsonian museums, sporting events, just kind of giving them the real American experience. And that's really what it is about, what the objective really is, and the homestay is really a big part of it.

The youth programs, especially those that take all the participants to the United States, provide the students with very powerful and unique experiences about the United States. The interviewees found that these personal experiences, especially, are affecting the students' understanding and image of the United States. It was also found in the literature review of this thesis that forming a personal connection with a country and its culture is a vital part in the process of developing cultural understanding.

Diplomat 2:

I think that a lot of misunderstandings they had previously – ideas of what America is like and what Americans are like were replaced with whole new realities. They now know Americans, they have traveled around, – – the people connection was what we were looking forward to with the program.

The interviewees highlighted the importance of the change in any preconditions or misunderstandings the youth might have had before the program. By traveling to the States and getting to know American people, also any stereotypes might be overcome. One of the interviewees also brought up the value of understanding a culture and a country to be able to critically analyze news or stories, and to overcome stereotypes.

Interview participants' conceptions on the primary motivations for engaging the young demographic in programs

The interviewees brought up the importance of engaging youth in these kinds of programs at a young age. The reasons provided here were that young people are at a stage in their lives when they are usually still forming their opinions and perceptions. In the literature review, this view was also found to be supported by researchers, for instance Checkoway and Aldana (2013). Therefore, youth are open to explore new ideas, and are also at the stage when they are choosing their career paths.

Many of the youth programs provided by the U.S. Embassy focus on leadership and what it requires to be a good leader. The U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth programs also aim to actively engage youth in their communities in different ways.

Diplomat 1:

Giving younger people in Finland that opportunity, and that experience, at this time of their lives, is a great privilege. – – they have self-identified to being interested in leadership, and being actively engaged in their communities. – – And we found that youth programs are a great way to reach out to a demographic that has not yet had a chance to experience the United States or met maybe as many Americans in their lifetime yet.

The importance of continuing to engage the youth alumni in various activities or other programs after the youth program was also discussed in the interview. The literature studied showed that youth engagement, in the form of for instance exchanges, competitions, or other kinds of programs, is a critical factor in influencing youth getting into leadership positions. The interviewees also recognize this phenomenon.

Diplomat 1:

– – over the years, we will hopefully see them getting into positions of leadership, in various Finnish institutions, governments, societies – and still have that touchstone with them as they move forward.

Diplomat 2:

And these are people who plan to have leadership positions in the future. So this (youth program experience) is something that they will take with them as they move forward.

The interview discussion unfolded that the primary motivations for providing youth programs are to let youth experience living and traveling in the United States and to get to know Americans. When young people are experiencing the culture, it might lead to a change in perceptions, and previous preconditions or cultural misunderstandings might be overcome. The youth program experience is also aimed to be beneficial for youth moving up into leadership positions in their communities in future.

4.1.2. Communicating About the Youth Programs

In this part is discussed how the embassy is communicating about youth programs to wider audiences, and what channels they are using. It is also discussed how the Embassy engages the youth program alumni into sharing their experiences after the programs.

Communication channels

The Embassy uses various channels to communicate and raise awareness of the youth programs. Within specifically the Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge, the Embassy has a national reach and visits places such as secondary schools across Finland. The channels and methods for communicating with the public include, for instance, information flyers, videos, the Embassy website, and social media channels. The content posted through these channels aims to be user-friendly and entertaining regarding the relationship with publics, but at the same time also informative in terms of the policy aspect.

Diplomat 1:

We look for interesting and fun things to post on social media that might increase awareness, but we also post messages from the President or messages from the Secretary and more, let's say, 'hard policy' topics from time to time. This is a way for us to reach Finns through the social media platforms with things that are important to the policy aspect and the bilateral relationship aspect as well.

Communicating through these channels aims at raising awareness of the cultural aspects, as well as of the various current issues and events in the country. The interviewees, however, emphasized that solely raising awareness through these communication channels does not, and is not aimed to, provide publics with certain truths or opinions. Traveling to the U.S. is necessary in order to be able to get a real experience of the country and form one's own opinions.

Diplomat 1:

Our image of the country is so diverse that we want people to go and see that diversity and make up their own mind and opinions. And not buy into the stereotypes. – – That's how we justify sending people to the United States and to experience it themselves.

Sharing alumni experiences about the youth programs

The interviewees discussed that the Embassy has not set guidelines or recommendations on how the youth should share their experiences after the youth programs. However, one important objective for providing those youth programs is that the participants would be able to learn and experience interesting new things and to share those experiences with their peers and other people. The Embassy is able to provide youth program alumni with resources and ways to share youth program experiences, for example in alumni events. The interviewees emphasized that they do not require anyone to share any of their experiences or possible change in perceptions, but they are willing to help the alumni if so requested. There are various different ways the Embassy has recognized youth to have shared their experiences and acted as influencers.

Diplomat 2:

I think it's very individual. – – We asked them how they might carry forward the knowledge and some people said, well I'm in this club and it could be a great way to spread the news. Or, in my school it's really encouraged to do an assembly so I would do it in that way. And some might say, well I'm an active blogger so I would like to blog when I'm in the U.S., and tell about my experience to everyone, those who follow can see that. Some [alumni] come up quickly with their ideas [to share].

Working with youth program alumni can give the Embassy a reference to the youth perceptions and opinions about the programs. As the youth alumni raise awareness about programs or grants by communicating to other Finnish youth, the Embassy is able to reach wider audiences.

Diplomat 1:

– – working with groups when they come back offers an opportunity to reach a wider audience – whether through publicizing grants or activities on social media or arranging interviews with returnees to share their experiences. – – we're looking for people that can act in multiple areas, that actively want to share

their experiences, and talk about what they learned, and how many of their perceptions have changed.

Overall, the key findings of this section suggest that the Embassy is using various channels to communicate about the youth programs. Moreover, when youth program alumni share their experiences with their peers, the awareness of the youth programs and experiences reach an even wider audience.

4.1.3. Effectiveness of Youth Programs as a Public Diplomacy Tool

Public diplomacy objectives

The interviewees also presented some of their views on the effectiveness of youth programs as a public diplomacy tool. They highlighted the importance of personal experience in America and connections with Americans.

Diplomat 2:

– – And that's really what it is about, and what the objective really is. – – They are really becoming familiar with America, American life, and Americans, and forming a very personal connection.

Indeed, one of the interviewees went on to describe the two outstanding objectives in public diplomacy.

Diplomat 1:

Generally, in public diplomacy, there are two, very grand objectives:

- 1. mutual understanding*
- 2. to tell America's story.*

So there are a variety of tools to that, and one of them is exchange programs.

One of the interviewees also presented their view on how the effectiveness of the youth programs as a public diplomacy tool may be examined on a four-category scale.

Diplomat 1:

We used to have a system for qualifying our activity on a four-category-scale – – the first level is; you send out a message. You share a picture or you put out a press release etc. – – Level two is proof that it was received. You put out a press release and a newspaper picks it up and writes a story that includes a line or quote etc. – – Third level is, maybe you reach an individual that you can say you have affected in some way – that they changed their opinion, their activity, their behavior, or their attitude, in some way. – – You tell us that your perception has changed, including a broader perspective of what America means. – – It's proved to us that that program was effective in accomplishing one of its goals. And then the fourth level, as you go up the pyramid – they come less and less frequently. The fourth level and perhaps the most desirable if you're looking at hard results is that an individual will try to lead an organization and change organizational structure or behavior in a way that reflects more closely the goals of the program they attended.

The interviewees discussed how an example of this “fourth level” could be to establish a club in school influenced by the youth program experience or the program theme:

Diplomat 1:

– – they go through our program (Ambassadors Entrepreneurial Challenge), they win, they go to the U.S., they come back full of ideas, and institute an entrepreneurship club in their school.

The interviewees' conceptions on the distinction between nation branding, PR and public diplomacy

The interviewees saw that since the United States is so diverse with the various cultures and backgrounds, it is merely unreasonable to find a certain image or an exclusive view of what America is. Therefore, there is no single view or brand that

could be desired to convey to Americans or foreign publics. They also made a distinction between public relations and public diplomacy. They saw that the United States public diplomacy is not PR in that the aim is not to push any stereotypes – instead, to overcome them.

Diplomat 1:

– – public diplomacy to me is broader (than PR). For that it's providing opportunity for people, to form their own opinions, it's sowing the seeds of connection, between the countries on a people to people basis, or institution to institutional basis, or organization to organization. Letting it grow, on its own, organically, according to the needs of individuals, and institutions – without government interference.

The basic work that we do, – – it's the person relationship building in an effort to educate people about the United States – to promote bilateral relationship, to promote the non-official relations that Finnish people have with American people.

In the literature review it was found that several researchers find public diplomacy related to nation branding. Those views seem to strongly contradict with the views of the Embassy on what public diplomacy is. Some researchers, however, were found to make a severe distinction between nation branding, PR, and public diplomacy, and indeed saw that public diplomacy is more of two-way-communication and relationship building, opposite to what nation branding is. As found based on the interview, the interviewees see youth programs as a public diplomacy tool, which is promoting dialogue and communication to and from publics, and the sharing of any experiences gained in those programs, whether positive or negative.

4.2. Survey Description

In this section the survey description is presented. The survey reached 38 respondents from a youth alumni population of about a 100. The following topics from the survey – perceptions, learning and sharing experiences, and communication – were chosen to

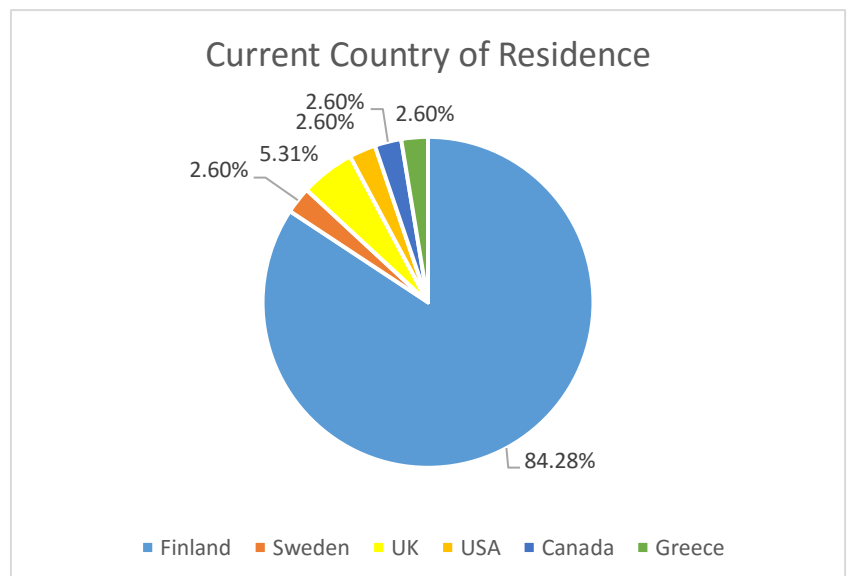
give a special emphasis on in this analysis. These topics are most relevant regarding the thesis and research objectives, and are also consistent with the interview description findings. First, however, will be presented some background and demographic information about the respondents, after which the results in the focus topics will be analysed and described in the above mentioned order. Lastly, some additional closing and feedback questions on the youth programs will be explored. See all the survey questions in the appendix 2, as well as tables supporting the following analysis in the appendix 3.

4.2.1. Demographics and Background

The survey respondents were from different age groups. The distribution was as follows: 18,4% of respondents were aged 13-18, 76,3% aged 19-24 and 5,3% of respondents 25 years or older. The distribution between gender of respondents was fairly even, with 57,9% female respondents and 42,1% male. The survey did also give an option of choosing “other” for gender.

Most of the survey respondents are currently living in Finland, with an 84,2% response rate. 5,3% reported living in the UK and the remaining part of the respondents reported living in Sweden, the USA, Canada, or Greece, 2,6% each.

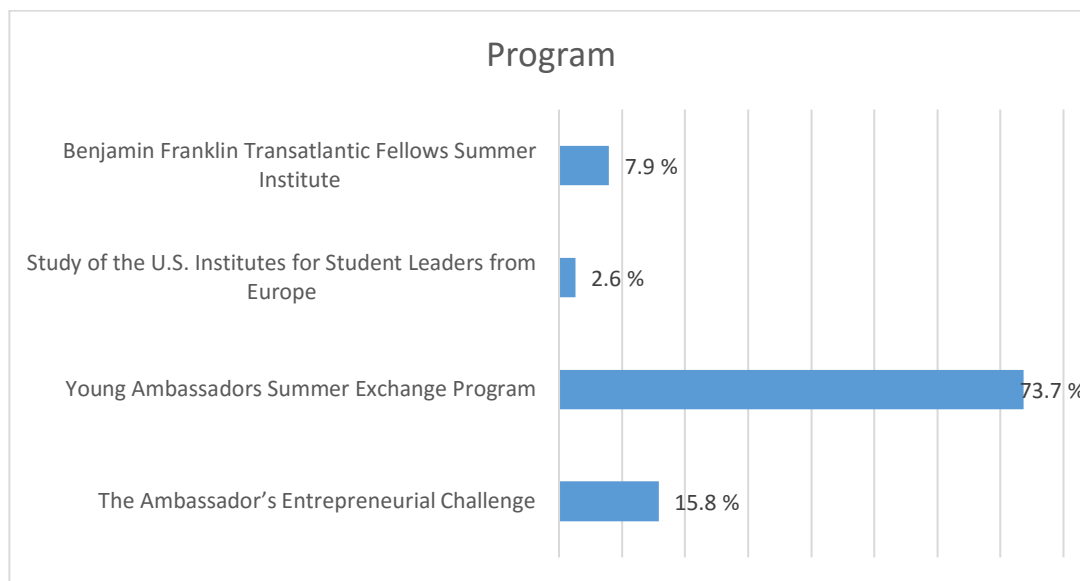
Figure 2: Current country of residence



The distribution between all the four youth programs researched, was fairly uneven. The majority of respondents, 73,7%, reported to have taken part in the Young Ambassadors Program. The program with the second largest amount of respondents, was the Ambassador’s Entrepreneurial Challenge, with almost 16% of respondents.

7,9% of respondents had taken part in the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Exchange program, and only 2,6% of the respondents participated in the Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders from Europe program. Among the respondents, the range for the year of participation in the above mentioned programs was from 2011 to 2016. There were several respondents from each year group.

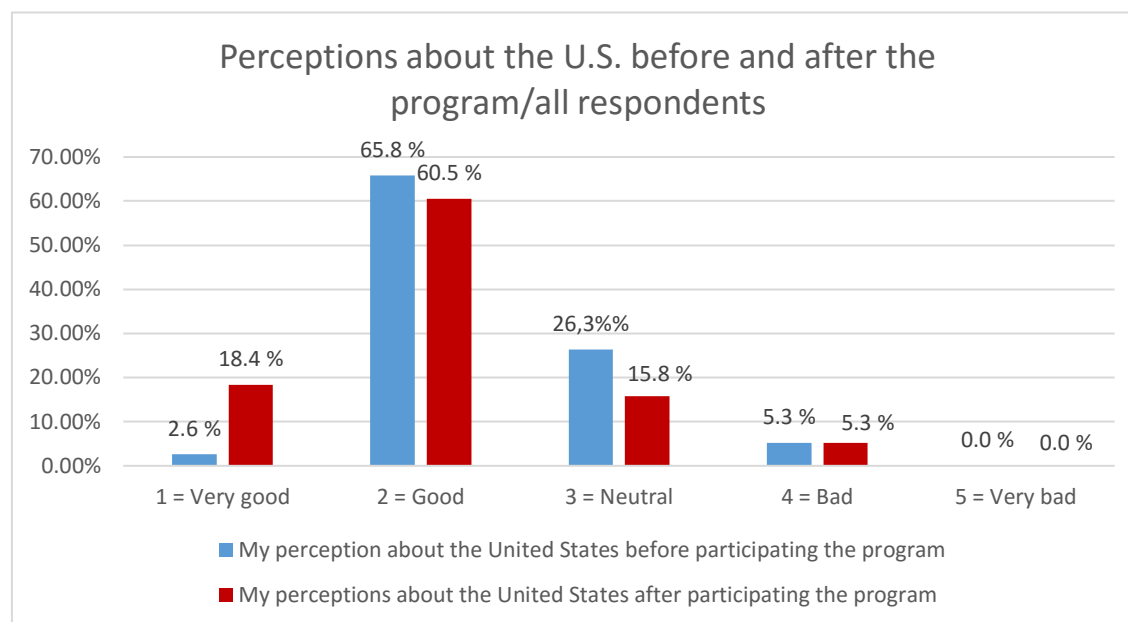
Figure 3: Program



4.2.2. Perceptions

The respondents were asked to present their perceptions about the United States before and after the programs. The results suggest that there is a difference in the perceptions of the U.S. before and after the youth program between genders. On the scale 1 to 5 (1=very good, 5=very bad), the mean of answers for female before the program is 2.500 and for male 2.125. After the program the means are for female 2.136 and for male 2.000. The results show that before the program, male had a better perception about the U.S. than their female peers. However, results show that the perceptions of females have had a significantly positive change after the program. The perceptions of male end up having a higher mean than that of female also after participating the program, but there is no outstanding difference for male before and after the program. See appendix 3.2. for the descriptive tables.

Figure 4: Perceptions about the U.S. before and after the program



There were also similar results between different youth programs, but since there was very uneven amount of participants from each of the programs, analyzing the results could lead to inaccurate conclusions. The results show that the perceptions have either improved a bit or remained the same when comparing scenarios before and after the programs. However, due to the rather uneven distribution of the respondents in each group these results by youth program cannot be generalized. The descriptive tables run by youth programs can be found in appendix 3.2.

The ANOVA table shows the significance level of 0,068 for the perceptions of the U.S. by gender before the program. For the perceptions of the U.S. by gender after the program, the ANOVA table shows the significance level of 0,587. In the significance level 0,05 the p-value of 0,068 is bigger than the significance level. However, since the p-value of 0,068 is rather close to the significance level, it can be concluded that there either is or there is no difference between the perceptions of different genders before the program. In the significance level 0,05 the p-value of 0,587 shows there is no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of genders after the program. The p-value 0,587 is significantly bigger than the significance level. Thus can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between genders on the perceptions after the program.

Table 1: Perceptions about the U.S. before participating the program

ANOVA					
My perception about the U.S. before participating the program					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.303	1	1.303	3.539	.068
Within Groups	13.250	36	.368		
Total	14.553	37			

Table 2: Perceptions about the U.S. after the program

ANOVA					
My perceptions about the U.S. after the program					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.172	1	.172	.301	.587
Within Groups	20.591	36	.572		
Total	20.763	37			

The paired t-test shows samples statistics for the perceptions about the U.S. before and after the program for each individual. According to the paired t-test the significance is .993. If the significance level is 0,05, then the t-test shows there is no statistically significant difference between the perceptions before and after the program.

Table 3: Paired t-test**Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	My perceptions about the U.S. after the program	2.079	38	.7491	.1215
	My perception about the United States in general before participating the program	2.342	38	.6271	.1017

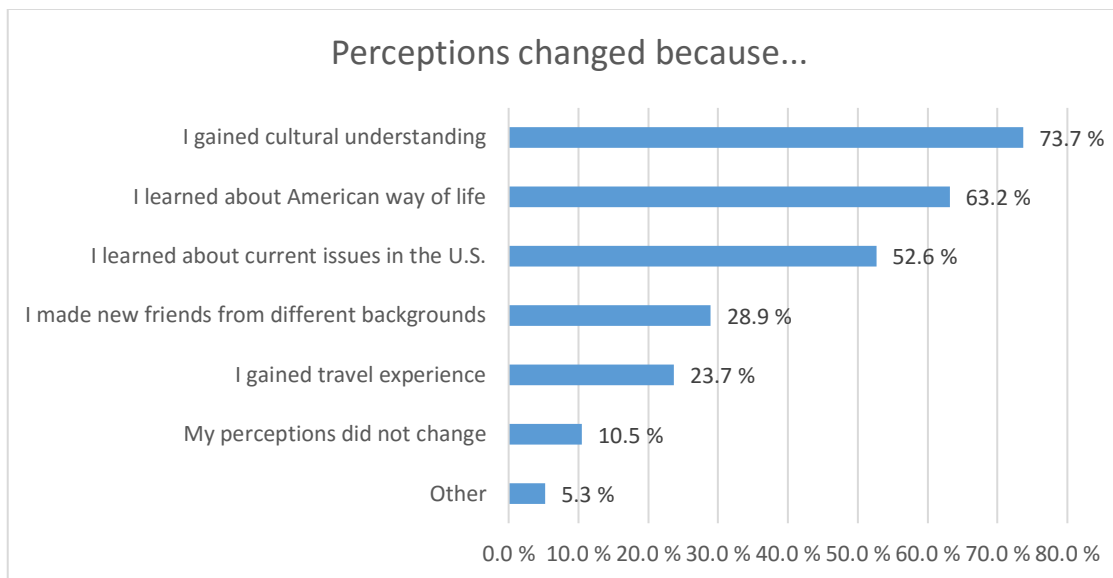
Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	My perceptions about the U.S. after the program & My perception about the United States in general before participating the program	38	-.002	.993

The question about why the respondents assume their perceptions changed, if they did, allowed respondents to tick all options that apply. Results suggest that the most influential reasons for the change in perceptions are cultural understanding and learning about the American way of life. 73,7% of survey respondents, 28 out of 38, found that their perceptions about the United States changed, since they gained cultural understanding. Around 63%, i.e. 24 survey respondents out of the 38 say that learning about American way of life had an impact on the change in their perceptions. The third most important factor for the change in perceptions, for 52,6% of respondents, was found to be learning about current issues in the U.S. Other factors that impacted the change in perceptions were the influence from new friends (28,9%)

during the youth program and also the travel experience in the U.S., by 23,7% of respondents.

Figure 5: Reasons for change in perceptions



Moreover, a few respondents found that there were some additional factors affecting the change in their perceptions. An example of a view here is:

Respondent 1:

I met a group of intelligent individuals who supported similar liberal views as I did. Prior to visit I had seen America in the light of conservatism.

This view could, however, be assumed to somehow have also been affected by all the above mentioned factors, for example by the influence of the friends made during the program or by learning about current issues.

Around 11% of respondents found that their perceptions did not change at all during the youth program, or all in all were neutral after the program. One respondent saw that their perception did improve for the reason of learning about the American way of life or gaining cultural understanding. However, the respondent saw also that the program participants were able to see some social issues first hand, which made the perception more negative. Overall, the respondent found that their perception was neutral, therefore not changing the overall perception to any better or worse.

According to the open comments, some respondents also found that even though their perception did not change so much, they think that their perception overall did "deepen" since they experienced some improvement in their cultural understanding. One respondent also pointed out that, because one of the programs took the youth to a very "neutral" state, the program participants did not experience very "extreme ways of living" or social issues. Their experiences could have been different and their perceptions affected positively or negatively, had they visited other kinds of places or other states than they did.

4.2.3. Learning

According to the survey results, the learning process has overall been very positive for youth alumni. 65,8% of respondents "strongly agreed" to having learned a lot by participating the U.S. Embassy Helsinki provided youth program, and around 29% "agreed" to this. The rest 5,3% were neutral. These results suggest that the youth programs have been rather beneficial for the learning experience of the participants.

Table 4: Learning

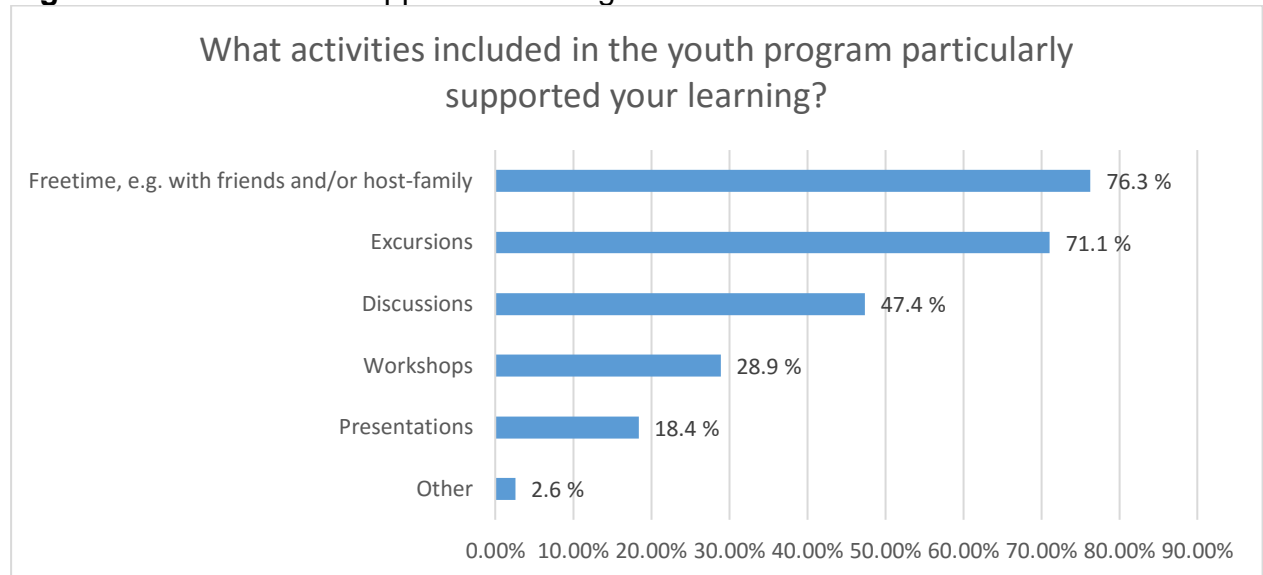
I learned a lot by participating the U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth program.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	25	65.8	65.8	65.8
	Agree	11	28.9	28.9	94.7
	Neutral	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

The respondents could pick all options that applied to their own learning experience for the question about what activities in the program particularly supported their learning. The top two options chosen were "Freetime, e.g. with friends and/or host family" chosen by 76,3% of respondents, and "excursions" by 71,1% of respondents. One respondent chose also "other" as an option and added that the pitching

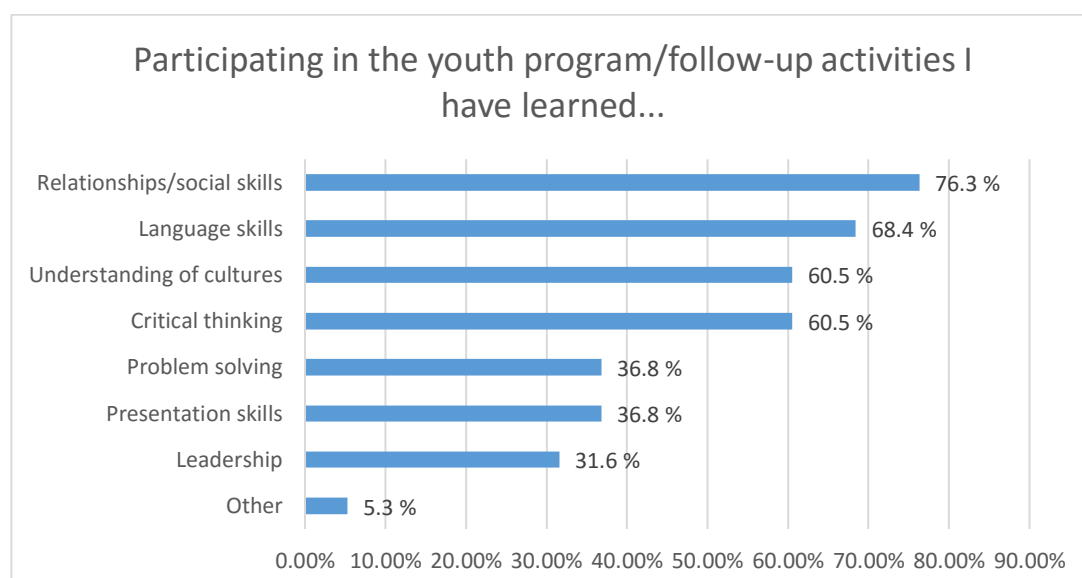
exercises were especially beneficial. See the chart below for all the percentages and options, and the appendix 3.3. for the frequency table.

Figure 6: Activities that supported learning



The results also show that the particular skills the respondents have learned in the youth program or in follow-up events or activities were mostly interpersonal and language skills, understanding of cultures and critical thinking. See the bar chart below for the percentages and appendix 3.3. for frequencies.

Figure 7: Skills learned



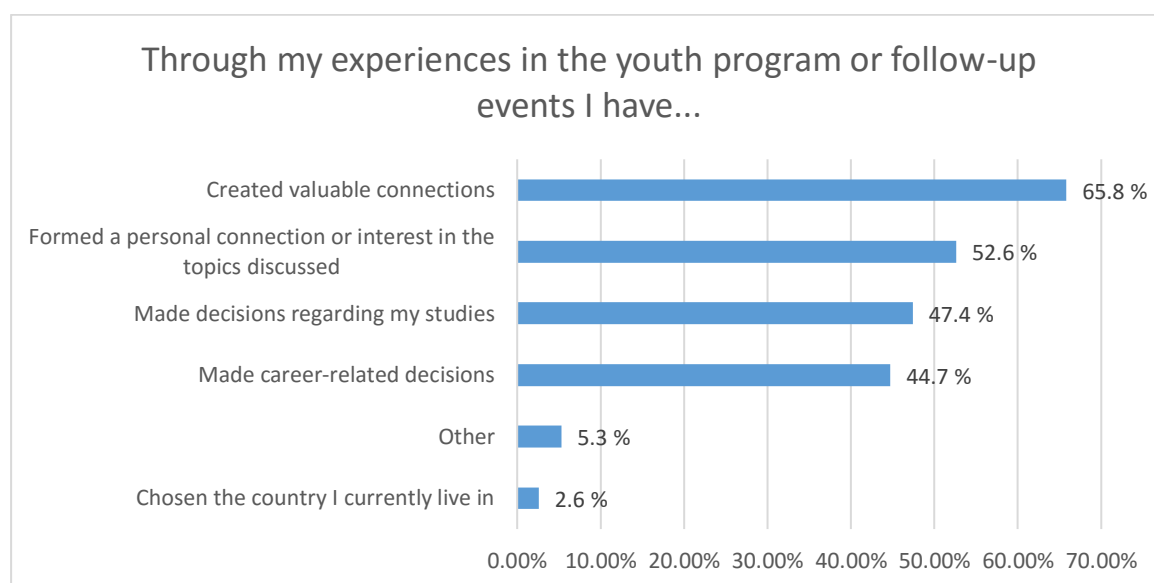
The single major benefit youth alumni find they have gained through their experiences in the programs is the valuable social connections they have made. More than a half of the respondents said that they have formed a personal connection or interest in the topics discussed in the programs. Moreover, almost half of the respondents say that they have made decisions related to career or studies. Perhaps, the respondent's interest towards the program themes or topics have influenced these decisions. One respondents who chose "other" described their thoughts as follows:

Respondent 2:

Realized something new and valuable about my home country ant [sic] its culture. Before, I was totally unaware of many things, for example, how recycling is on a much more advanced level than in many European countries or Colorado. And also the way we Finns hardly ever talk about our success or present it to others. This was a contrast to what I experienced in Colorado and the way American achievements in environmental issues were proudly presented there, even if they weren't anything close to what we already have in Finland.

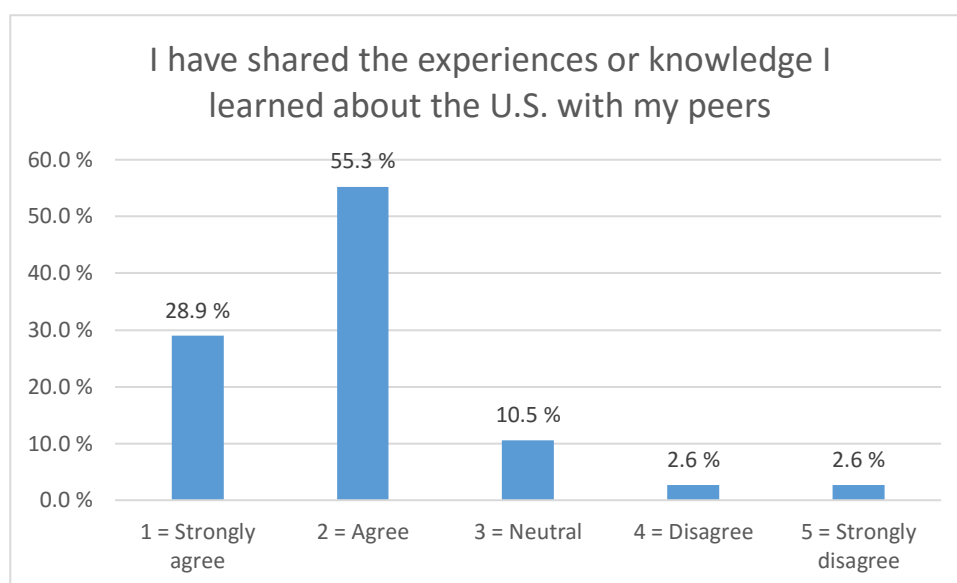
See below the bar chart for percentages, and appendix 3.3. for frequencies.

Figure 8: The benefit of youth programs or alumni activities



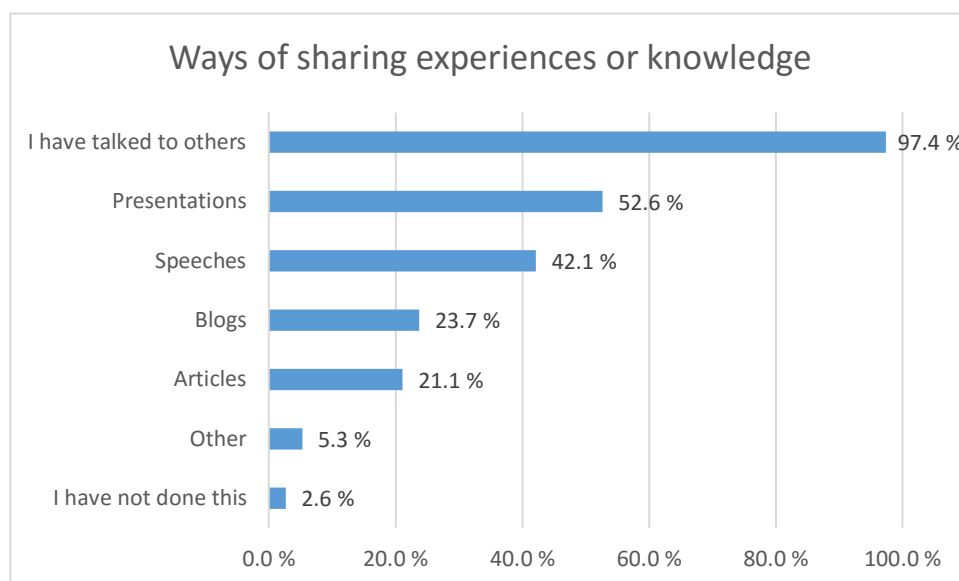
Out of the survey respondents, altogether 84,2% answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to the question on whether they have shared the experiences or knowledge they gained through the youth programs. More specifically, 55,3% chose “agree” and 28,9% “strongly agree”. 10,5% were neutral whether or not they have shared their experiences, and altogether 5,3% of respondents “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” to have shared the experiences or knowledge they gained about the United States.

Figure 9: Sharing experiences



Survey results show that there have been several different ways for sharing knowledge or experiences. The survey allowed respondents to choose all that applied out of several options, or to also choose “other” if they came up with any other ways they had shared their experiences. The most utilized way for sharing was found to be word of mouth, “I have talked to others” with a result of 97,37% of respondents. The second most utilized way for sharing experiences or knowledge was through presentations (52,63%), and the third most utilized way was speeches (42,11%). Writing blogs (23,68%) or articles (21,05%) were also applied as ways of sharing. “Other” was answered by 5,26 % of respondents, suggesting for instance that they had shared their experiences in social media. Only 2,63% of respondents indicated that they have not shared their experiences in any way.

Figure 10: Ways of sharing experiences or knowledge



There is a noteworthy relationship between the categories “participating in the youth program having a positive impact in in my life” and “I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program”. The crosstab table below (table 5) shows that altogether 30 (78,9%) respondents out of 38 answered “strongly agree” to both categories. Thus, from the results it may be concluded that the overall positive impact experienced from the youth program may be related with higher willingness to recommend programs to others.

Table 5: Crosstabulation

I consider that participating in the youth program has had a positive impact in my life. * I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program.

Crosstabulation

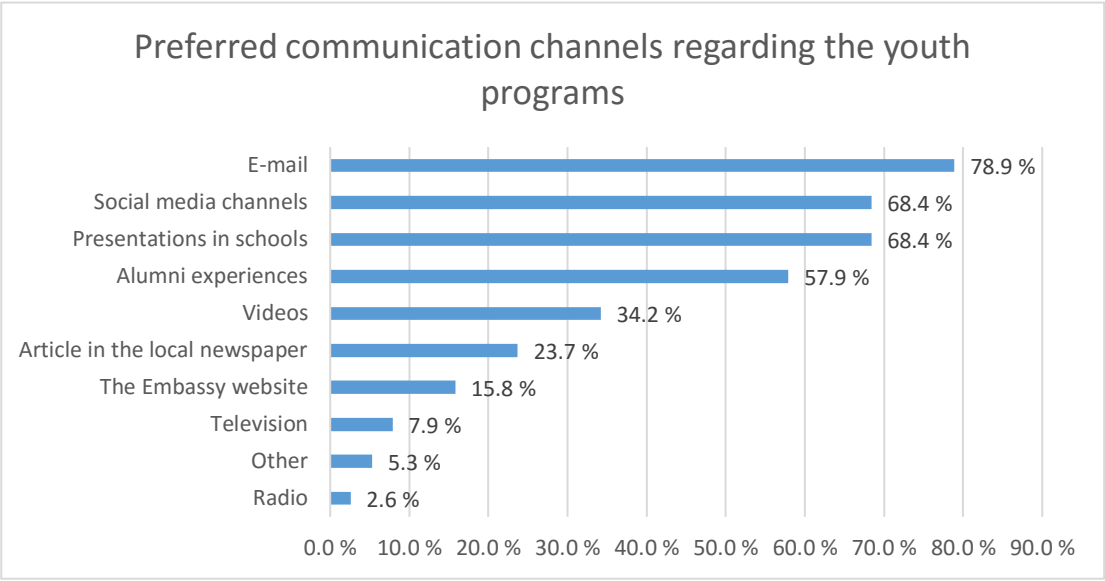
Count

		I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program.			Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	
I consider that participating in the youth program has had a positive impact in my life.	Strongly agree	30	2	0	32
	Agree	1	4	0	5
	Disagree	0	0	1	1
Total		31	6	1	38

4.2.4. Communication and Alumni Engagement

Below can be seen a chart showing preferences for different communication channels about the youth programs. The chart allowed the respondents to choose all options that applied. The most preferred communication channel is email with a response rate of 78,9%. The second most preferred options are social media channels and presentations in schools. Hearing about alumni experiences was preferred by 57,9% of respondents. Also videos were preferred as a good communication channel by a third of respondents (34,2%). Other channels preferred by a smaller amount of respondents were articles in a newspaper, the Embassy website, television, radio, and phone for the “other” option. See appendix 3.4. for frequencies.

Figure 11: Preferred communication channels



The survey results show that alumni hope for more active communication from the embassy about events in order to keep them more actively involved after the youth programs. The respondents found that email is the most effective way to get alumni involved. One respondent also proposed that there should be one or two alumni who were responsible for keeping in touch with the embassy regularly, in order to keep the mailing list up to date and alumni involved. These contact persons from the alumni would be important since the administration in the embassy is changing approximately every three years.

Many alumni commented in the open feedback sections in the survey that they would like to attend more alumni events in near future and organize get-togethers. Many respondents also said that they would like to get to know also the new program participants and share their experiences. Many respondents also hoped to have a more active Youth Council at the Embassy.

There were many ideas for alumni engagement. Many respondents proposed that alumni could go presenting the youth programs they participated in to high schools. Some respondents suggested that youth alumni could be given universal presentation material, which could include some facts and numbers that would form the basis of the presentations about the youth program experiences. One respondent brought up that if

the Embassy representatives visited more schools to give presentations on the youth programs, the emphasis would be too much on the capital city region. It is usually intended that the program participants come across Finland to ensure representation of different backgrounds. Therefore, the idea of youth alumni presenting their experiences in high schools in their hometowns would be functional. Following are some of the open comments from the respondents on the communication from the Embassy and ideas for engagement and development:

Open comment 1:

I wish the embassy would say [sic] in contact with us more, I feel like we haven't heard from them for a year except for asking us to spread the message of the Benjamin Franklin program. I would also love to get to know the alumni from before our program, since we were the last young ambassadors (2015). Just more interaction!

Open comment 2:

Social Media, Radio (Spotify commercials especially have an impact since most of the youth uses the app for music and has to listen to the in-betweens), email to schools and other channels, naturally through the alumni.

Open comment 3:

I think alumni experiences are valuables [sic], listening to other's experiences can have a huge impact! Social media channels would probably work well. Personally I heard about the US Embassy youth programs via email. That's why I think that email is also an important medium.

Open comment 4:

Invite alumni to discuss youth related issues and give a chance to find and innovate solutions to those issues in the community.

4.2.5. Feedback

The survey also gave the respondents an opportunity to give any additional feedback on the youth programs they participated in. 76,3% of respondents gave feedback or ideas for improvement at the end of the survey.

The positive experiences and the benefits of the programs were visible in many of the feedback comments.

Feedback 1:

Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge was an amazing experience! Thank you for that! It helped me to clear my mind and figure out what I really want to do when I grow up. The program was exceedingly well organized and was enjoyable from stem to stern.

Feedback 2:

As a participant of one of these programs, I can sincerely say it has sculpted my life, the confidence I have gained and the abilities through which I may pursue my future goals and aspirations career wise and personally. Not only did I gain invaluable [sic] experience but the connections and friends I've made during and after the program are an unmeasurable treasure to have. I hope the programs continue and give a chance to other kids to realize their potential.

Feedback 3:

I will never be able to thank U.S. Embassy enough for giving me the chance to participate in Young Ambassadors Summer Exchange Program - it has been one of the best experiences of my life.

Feedback 4:

Very good and provide an interesting way to learn about things, the environmental theme maybe would have not been as effective when lectured in class at own school but the whole travel experience really got me into it.

Feedback 5:

In my experience the youth program I attended was somewhat a lifechanger to me. In this day and age where globalisation is a everyday thing I think any kinds of international events programs etc are crucial in developing and maintaining needed social skills and understanding of other cultures.

4.2.6. Conclusion

Results show that overall, youth have positive experiences about the youth programs. However, out of the 38 respondents there was one respondent, who strongly disagreed to having shared any experiences or knowledge to their peers. There was also one respondent who strongly disagreed that they would recommend participating the youth program to others. However, results show that none of the respondents answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to the question about learning a lot in either the youth program or in the follow-up activities. This means that also those respondents who had had a somehow negative experience, however, found the learning experience somewhat significant. Thus, the results suggest that the youth programs are an effective means of raising awareness of the United States and also have a lot of benefit on the alumni personal lives through the learning experiences they gain in several different ways.

Despite the fact that the statistical tests show that there is no statistically significant change in the perceptions of youth before and after the program, the responses to qualitative questions do show the change in perceptions. Since the sample is fairly small, the quantitative results are not sufficiently accurate for an inclusive significance analysis. Therefore, by relying on the qualitative responses can more comprehensive and accurate conclusions be made.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Main Findings

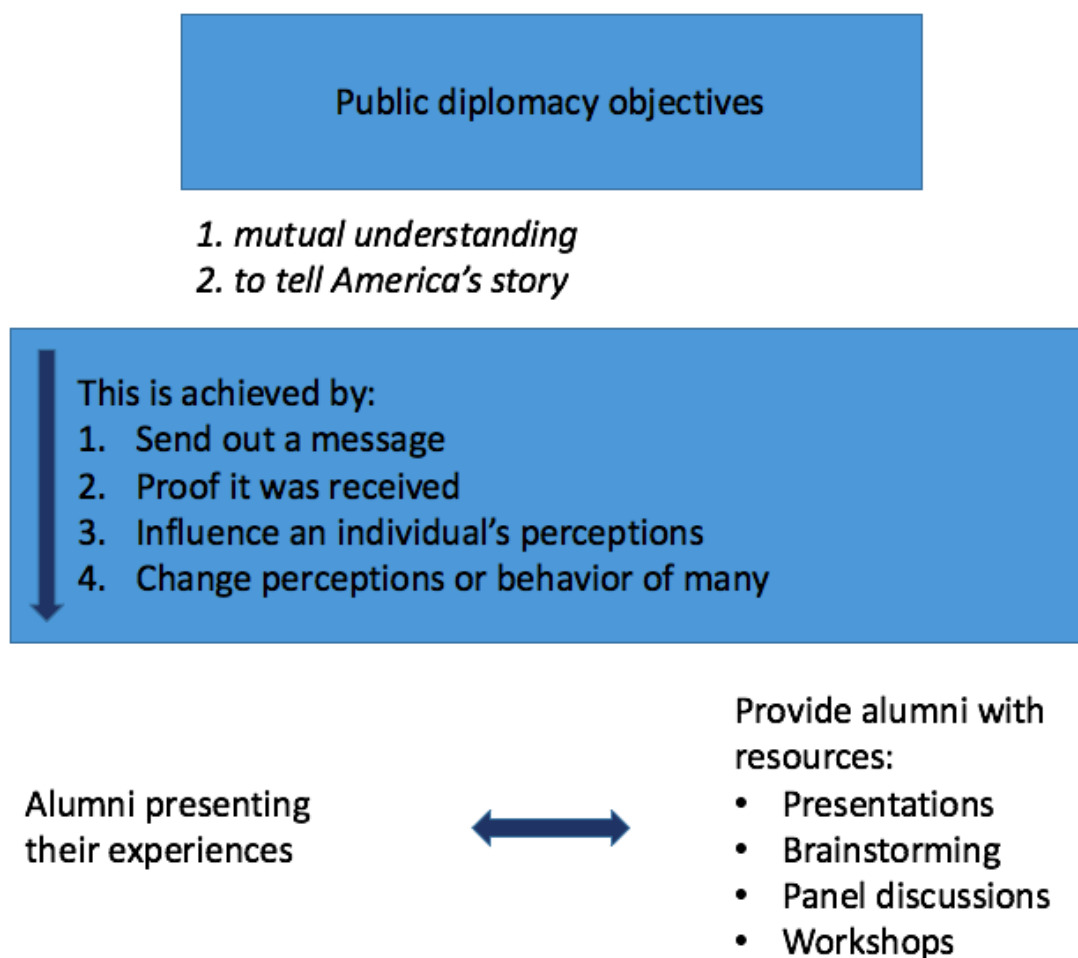
Mostly the interview and survey findings supported the previous research on motivations for youth engagement, for instance regarding the importance of forming a personal interest or connection with the program topic or theme. The thesis findings from the literature review and the interview show that youth engagement objectives are in line with the main objectives of public diplomacy: understanding of and exposure to a country and its culture. However, this research provides new insights to how effective the youth programs are in achieving the public diplomacy objectives.

The key findings of this thesis suggest that the most valuable benefits youth programs offer are related to forming relationships with American people and gaining understanding about the United States. According to the survey results, the perceptions of youth have improved during the programs, and specific factors for the change in perceptions were also introduced. It was also found that the programs have provided youth with learning experiences that have been beneficial for them in several different ways. Many respondents had formed a connection or interest towards the program topic or theme, which allowed youth to benefit from the program in many ways.

It was found in the interview that there is a framework of four stages with which the embassy qualifies the effectiveness of youth programs. This framework presents the effectiveness from the perspective of the Embassy. Based on the thesis findings, an example of the stages could be suggested to be as follows: the embassy first sends out a message about the application period for youth programs. The second stage is when they receive applications, thus knowing their message has been received and that there is interest towards the program. The third stage is achieved when a program participant changes their perception of the United States and gains cultural understanding. The fourth and most optimal stage is that individuals put the learned skills and knowledge into action and share experiences to a wider audience, reflecting the goals or theme of the program. Achieving the fourth stage indicates an effective achievement of the youth program objectives.

The results show a noteworthy relationship with the positive experiences in the youth programs and the willingness to recommend program to others. Results show that youth are sharing the experiences or knowledge they have gained in the youth programs or alumni activities in several different ways. Survey responses suggest that youth want to be more involved with the Embassy in the future and would like to have an even more active involvement in the Embassy youth projects. Many respondents indicated that they are especially interested in giving presentations and sharing experiences in high schools in the future. In this way alumni could reach wider audiences whom to share their experiences and knowledge about the United States with. By giving presentations youth are influencing the perceptions and behavior of other people, and perhaps encouraging them to also apply to U.S. Embassy provided youth programs and travel to the United States. This activity can be interpreted as the fourth stage in the framework of youth program effectiveness. Following is presented a framework based on the thesis findings.

Figure 12. Framework presenting thesis findings



In this thesis research it was found that the alumni experiences largely match the Embassy's expectations for their youth programs. Hence, in the light of the research findings, it can be suggested that the youth programs are an effective and important public diplomacy tool.

5.2. Recommendations

The survey results show that many respondents would be willing to be more involved in the Embassy youth projects. Many respondents suggested that they want to contribute to the future youth programs and suggested that alumni could visit high schools and tell about their experiences in the programs. Since the participants of the youth programs are usually selected from across Finland, youth alumni could visit

schools nearby their hometowns, spreading awareness of the youth programs in many schools around the country. This could give more young people a chance to get involved with the Embassy youth programs. Moreover, when the Embassy knows what kind of methods youth alumni are using or what kind of methods they would like to use for sharing their youth program experiences, the needs and the right resources can meet. For example, as many respondents indicated their willingness to share their experiences e.g. in high schools, the Embassy could support this activity by providing the materials for the presentations.

5.3. Implications for International Business

Youth engagement in youth programs and intercultural exchanges is a global phenomenon that increases its significance continuously due to globalization. For this reason, there is going to be a need for understanding different cultures and habits on a daily basis in working life. Youth programs, educational, cultural and exchange programs are provided by several organizations, some of which are also discussed in this thesis paper. Understanding of cultures, languages and being able to think critically are vital parts of being able to do business in the global community and understanding differences but also similarities between people. Youth programs are breaking geographical barriers of nations and promoting a more cohesive and global environment of mutual understanding. This allows youth to get international experience and possibility to participate and share their innovations and points of view to the global community.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

Since the previous research on the effectiveness of government sponsored youth programs as a public diplomacy tool is very limited, or likely to have been bypassed, there was not significant amount of literature available on the topic. Hence, areas related to the topic were researched in order to form an understanding of the existing literature in some of the most relevant concepts related to this research. Since the

academic literature focusing on the actual topic was fairly limited, the research is much relying on the results found in the interview and the survey conducted for youth alumni.

The primary data collection methods for this thesis had some limitations. Primarily, only one interview was conducted, with a fairly qualitative approach. Moreover, the population of the survey was fairly small from only four youth programs resulting in approximately a population of a hundred people and a sample of 38. Therefore, the data cannot be extensively generalized. With a more quantitative approach and a larger sample size for the survey the results might have differed. In order to get more generalizable results of the motivations for and effectiveness of youth engagement in the U.S. Embassy youth programs, also other stakeholders could be interviewed. For example, the program financiers, and other parties collaborated with the organization of youth programs, could be interviewed or surveyed. Having a larger population could have offered results that might have differed from the ones presented in this thesis.

Moreover, the respondents of the survey did all participate in a U.S. Embassy youth program in years 2011-2016. There was the same administration in the United States from 2011 to 2016. Therefore, it could be that if the respondents had participated the youth programs during different administrations in the country, also the perceptions and experiences might have varied.

Nonresponse error or bias should be taken into account. All people who the link was sent to, did not fill in the survey. There might be several reasons for not answering the survey. Moreover, the amount of time needed to fill out the survey of approximately 10 minutes for one response might lead to inaccuracy in some responses. Because of the length of the survey, the respondents might not have had enough time to familiarize themselves with particular questions. It might also be the case that the population of approximately a hundred did not include all program participants, if their email addresses were missing from the mailing list for the survey. Furthermore, an important aspect to take into consideration is that the majority of respondents were from one youth program. Therefore, the results might be too much reflecting the perceptions of participants of a single youth program, perhaps affecting the results.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Research

Overall, youth engagement in the Department of State provided youth programs as a tool for reaching public diplomacy goals is still a fairly new phenomenon in academic literature. Therefore, this study provides a number of suggestions for further research.

As discussed in the previous section, using a larger sample size would provide a more generalizable overview of youth program effectiveness. Including for example views of other stakeholders, such as the financiers or exchange organizations, a more complete picture and understanding of the topic and more reliable results could be obtained. Indeed, conducting a survey also to other stakeholders than the youth alumni, could offer valuable data from further points of view. Moreover, the effectiveness of youth engagement in exchange programs to the United States in comparison with those youth activities or projects organized in the host country (i.e. in Finland) could be further studied, providing valuable information for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Questionnaire

The United States Embassy in Helsinki, 20 January, 2017

Interview on the U.S. Embassy Helsinki's objectives for and effectiveness of youth engagement as a public diplomacy tool.

Youth Engagement

1. What are the Embassy's objectives in youth engagement in the educational programs and alumni activities?
 - a. Do you think the programs have been effective in reaching the objectives?
2. What different educational youth programs does the Embassy have?
 - b. Previously/currently
3. What are the reasons for having terminated some youth programs?
 - c. Are new programs started when others are terminated?
4. For what age group are the youth programs usually targeted?
 - d. In addition to age, what are other objectives of selecting target groups?
5. Do you continue to engage the youth alumni after youth programs?
 - e. What are the objectives for engaging youth alumni after the youth programs?

Promotion

6. Do you encourage youth alumni to share their experiences?
 - i. In what ways do you encourage them to do this?

- ii. How are youth program alumni spreading the knowledge they gained during their program in the U.S.?
- 7. Have you cooperated with media or social media channels to promote the youth programs?
 - f. How?

Branding

- 8. Would you say that countries try to manage their images through embassies?
 - a. If yes, what do you consider as challenges in the U.S. nation brand management?
- 9. If there is a brand communication strategy designed especially for Finland, how is it like?
 - a. If there is, how big a role does the branding targeted to youth play in the U.S. embassy Helsinki's overall nation brand communication strategy?

Research & Communication

- 10. What are the channels for the Embassy to communicate about the youth programs?
 - g. Do you see these channels effective?
 - h. What do you think could be improved?
- 11. Are you measuring the effectiveness of youth engagement in terms of your objectives for the engagement?
 - i. If you are measuring, how are you doing it?
 - j. If you are not, which could be useful tools for measuring it?
- 12. Have you received feedback or suggestions from the youth program alumni?
 - k. Was the received feedback useful?
 - l. Did the feedback affect the activities you offer for youth?

Closing

13. Overall, what have been the biggest benefits you have gained through youth engagement?

14. Is there anything else you might want to add?

Appendix 2

Survey

Following will be presented the survey questionnaire.

Questionnaire for U.S. Embassy Helsinki Youth Program Alumni

This survey is an important part of a bachelor's thesis project on U.S. Embassy youth programs. This questionnaire is targeted to youth program alumni, who have participated in one or more of the following US Embassy Helsinki provided youth programs:

Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute
Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders from Europe
Young Ambassadors Summer Exchange Program
The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge

This survey gives its participants a chance to reflect back to their youth program within the U.S. Embassy Helsinki. By combining the responses of all of you who participated, information will be obtained about alumni's experiences. The survey data is aimed to be helpful with the development of educational youth programs and follow-up/alumni activities in the future. The responses will be used for the bachelor's thesis work of Jessina Nieminen, who participated the Young Ambassadors Program in 2012. Filling out the questionnaire takes approximately 10 minutes. Thank you for your important effort.

Terms of Service: *

The U.S. Embassy Helsinki has not taken part in designing the questions or this survey. Statistical summaries based on the responses will be compiled for the thesis project. Responses given by individual respondents cannot be separated from the summaries. The administrator of this tool is the only person with access to your responses, and they are bound to secrecy.

Some basic demographic information will be asked for the summaries in order to make some distinctions between each program: age, gender, year of participating the U.S. Embassy youth program and which one, and the country where currently live in.

1. Do you accept the terms of service to continue?

* I accept the terms of service

* I do not accept the terms of service

DEMOGRAPHICS & BACKGROUND

2. What is your age?

13-18

19-24

25+

3. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

4. Country you currently live in?

(open)

5. Year of participating in a U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth program?

(Open)

6. Which youth program(s) did you participate in? (check all that apply)
- Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Summer Institute
 - Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders from Europe
 - Young Ambassadors Summer Exchange Program
 - The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge
7. What was your motivation to apply for/participate in the U.S. Embassy youth program? (check all that apply)
- Make new friends
 - Gain recognition by receiving the grant
 - Gain travel experience
 - The interesting theme/topic of the program
 - Valuable experience regarding future career
 - Learn cultural understanding
 - Gain language skills
 - Other (open)

PERCEPTIONS

8. My perception about the United States in general before participating the program
- Very good
 - Good
 - Neutral
 - Bad
 - Very bad
9. What factors had influenced these perceptions the most? (check all that apply)
- Movies
 - News
 - Politics
 - Stories (e.g. from family, friends)
 - Books

Television

Other (Open)

10. My perceptions about the U.S. after the program

Very good

Good

Neutral

Bad

Very bad

11. If my perceptions about the U.S. changed, I consider that is mostly because
(check all that apply)

I learned about current issues in the U.S.

I made new friends from different backgrounds

I gained travel experience

I learned about American way of life

I gained cultural understanding

Other (Open)

If my perceptions did not change, why? (Open)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

12. I learned a lot by participating the U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth program.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

13. Which of the following activities included in the youth program supported your learning the most? (check all that apply)

Excursions

Workshops

Presentations

Discussions

Free time, e.g. with friends and/or host-family

Other (Open)

14. Have you participated in follow-up U.S. Embassy events or projects after the program?

Yes

No

15. By participating the youth program or follow-up activities I have learned (check all that apply)

Understanding of cultures

Language skills

Presentation skills

Relationships/social skills

Critical thinking

Leadership

Problem solving

Other (Open)

16. Through my experiences in the youth program and/or follow-up events, I have (check all that apply)

Created valuable connections

Made career-related decisions

Made decisions regarding my studies

Chosen the country I currently live in

Formed a personal connection or interest in the topics discussed

Other (Open)

17. I have shared the experiences or knowledge I learned about the U.S. with my peers

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

18. What have been the ways for sharing the experiences or knowledge? (check all that apply)

Speeches

Blogs

Articles

Presentations

I have talked to others

Other (Open)

I have not done this

COMMUNICATION

19. How would you rate the communication from the U.S. Embassy before and after the program?

Very good

Good

Neutral

Bad

Very bad

20. Which of the following channels/methods of communication from the Embassy would you find the most effective regarding youth programs? (check all that apply)

E-mail

Presentations in schools

Videos

Alumni experiences

The Embassy website

Social media channels

Article in the local newspaper

Radio

Television

Other (Open)

21. As a youth program alumna/alumnus, I would like to get some more information/updates from the Embassy on (check all that apply)

Current issues in the U.S.

Possibilities of learning about civic participation or empowerment in the community

Other youth programs or projects

U.S. culture or history related events

Recommendations for books from U.S. authors

Other (Open)

I do not want any information/updates

CLOSING AND FEEDBACK

22. I consider that participating in the youth program has had a positive impact in my life.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

23. I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

24. Ideas or feedback to the embassy as to how they can keep program alumni involved after the youth program? (Open)
25. Any ideas on how the Embassy can reach out to new people about youth programs? (Open)
26. Any additional feedback on the youth programs provided by the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki? (Open)

Appendix 3

Survey Data Analysis, Tables and Charts

3.1. Demographics and background

What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	13-18	7	18.4	18.4	18.4
	19-24	29	76.3	76.3	94.7
	25+	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

What is your gender?

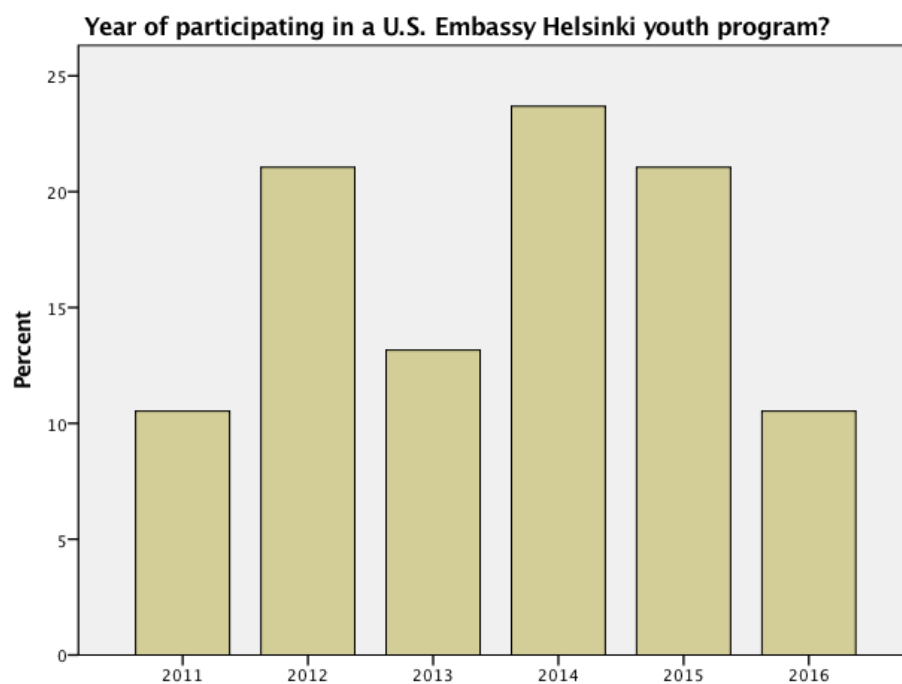
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	22	57.9	57.9	57.9
	Male	16	42.1	42.1	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Country you currently live in?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Finland	32	84.2	84.2	84.2
	Sweden	1	2.6	2.6	86.8
	UK	2	5.3	5.3	92.1
	USA	1	2.6	2.6	94.7
	Canada	1	2.6	2.6	97.4
	Greece	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Year of participating in a U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth program?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2011	4	10.5	10.5	10.5
	2012	8	21.1	21.1	31.6
	2013	5	13.2	13.2	44.7
	2014	9	23.7	23.7	68.4
	2015	8	21.1	21.1	89.5
	2016	4	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	



Which youth program(s) did you participate in?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows	3	7.9	7.9	7.9
	Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders	1	2.6	2.6	10.5
	Young Ambassadors Program	28	73.7	73.7	84.2
	The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge	6	15.8	15.8	100.0
Total		38	100.0	100.0	

3.2. Perceptions

My perception about the U.S. before participating the program

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very good	1	2.6	2.6	2.6
Good	25	65.8	65.8	68.4
Neutral	10	26.3	26.3	94.7
Bad	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

My perceptions about the U.S. after the program

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very good	7	18.4	18.4	18.4
Good	23	60.5	60.5	78.9
Neutral	6	15.8	15.8	94.7
Bad	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Factors influencing possible change in perceptions

Factors influencing change in perceptions ^a	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
I learned about current issues in the U.S.	20	20.4%	52.6%
I made new friends from different backgrounds	11	11.2%	28.9%
I gained travel experience	9	9.2%	23.7%
I learned about American way of life	24	24.5%	63.2%
I gained cultural understanding	28	28.6%	73.7%
Other	2	2.0%	5.3%
If my perceptions did not change, why?	4	4.1%	10.5%
Total	98	100.0%	257.9%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Descriptives

My perception about the U.S. before participating the program

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Female	22	2.500	.6726	.1434	2.202	2.798	2.0	4.0
Male	16	2.125	.5000	.1250	1.859	2.391	1.0	3.0
Total	38	2.342	.6271	.1017	2.136	2.548	1.0	4.0

My perceptions about the U.S. after the program

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Female	22	2.136	.7743	.1651	1.793	2.480	1.0	4.0
Male	16	2.000	.7303	.1826	1.611	2.389	1.0	4.0
Total	38	2.079	.7491	.1215	1.833	2.325	1.0	4.0

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
My perception about the U.S. before participating the program	Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows	3	2.000	.0000	.0000	2.000	2.000	2.0	2.0
	Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders	1	2.000	.	.	.	.	2.0	2.0
	Young Ambassadors Program	28	2.393	.6853	.1295	2.127	2.659	1.0	4.0
	The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge	6	2.333	.5164	.2108	1.791	2.875	2.0	3.0
	Total	38	2.342	.6271	.1017	2.136	2.548	1.0	4.0
My perceptions about the U.S. after the program	Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows	3	1.000	.0000	.0000	1.000	1.000	1.0	1.0
	Study of the U.S. Institutes for Student Leaders	1	2.000	.	.	.	.	2.0	2.0
	Young Ambassadors Program	28	2.179	.6696	.1265	1.919	2.438	1.0	4.0
	The Ambassador's Entrepreneurial Challenge	6	2.167	.9832	.4014	1.135	3.198	1.0	4.0
	Total	38	2.079	.7491	.1215	1.833	2.325	1.0	4.0

3.3. Learning and sharing experiences

I learned a lot by participating the U.S. Embassy Helsinki youth program.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	25	65.8	65.8	65.8
Agree	11	28.9	28.9	94.7
Neutral	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Have you participated in follow-up U.S. Embassy events or projects after the program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	32	84.2	84.2	84.2
No	6	15.8	15.8	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

**I have shared the experiences or knowledge I learned about the U.S.
with my peers**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	11	28.9	28.9	28.9
Agree	21	55.3	55.3	84.2
Neutral	4	10.5	10.5	94.7
Disagree	1	2.6	2.6	97.4
Strongly disagree	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Ways of sharing experiences or knowledge to others

Ways of sharing experiences or knowledge ^a	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Speeches	16	17.2%	42.1%
Blogs	9	9.7%	23.7%
Articles	8	8.6%	21.1%
Presentations	20	21.5%	52.6%
I have talked to others	37	39.8%	97.4%
Other (Sharing experiences)	2	2.2%	5.3%
I have not done this (Sharing experiences)	1	1.1%	2.6%
Total	93	100.0%	244.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

What activities included in the youth program particularly supported your learning?

What activities supported my learning? ^a	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Excursions	27	29.0%	71.1%
Workshops	11	11.8%	28.9%
Presentations	7	7.5%	18.4%
Discussions	18	19.4%	47.4%
Freetime, e.g. with friends and/or host-family	29	31.2%	76.3%
Other	1	1.1%	2.6%
Total	93	100.0%	244.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Participating the youth program/follow-up activities I have learned

What particular skills I have learned? ^a	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Understanding of cultures	23	16.1%	60.5%
Language skills	26	18.2%	68.4%
Presentation skills	14	9.8%	36.8%
Relationships/social skills	29	20.3%	76.3%
Critical thinking	23	16.1%	60.5%
Leadership	12	8.4%	31.6%
Problem solving	14	9.8%	36.8%
Other	2	1.4%	5.3%
Total	143	100.0%	376.3%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Through my experiences in the youth program/follow-up events, I have

Influence of the program ^a	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Created valuable connections	25	30.1%	65.8%
Made career-related decisions	17	20.5%	44.7%
Made decisions regarding my studies	18	21.7%	47.4%
Chosen the country I currently live in	1	1.2%	2.6%
Formed a personal connection or interest in the topics discussed	20	24.1%	52.6%
Other (Impact of the program)	2	2.4%	5.3%
Total	83	100.0%	218.4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

3.4. Communication and alumni engagement

How would you rate the communication from the U.S. Embassy before and after the program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very good	9	23.7	23.7	23.7
Good	17	44.7	44.7	68.4
Neutral	11	28.9	28.9	97.4
Bad	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	38	100.0	100.0	

\$Communication Frequencies

Preferred Communication Channels ^a	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
E-mail	30	21.7%	78.9%
Presentations in schools	26	18.8%	68.4%
Videos	13	9.4%	34.2%
Alumni experiences	22	15.9%	57.9%
The Embassy website	6	4.3%	15.8%
Social media channels	26	18.8%	68.4%
Article in the local newspaper	9	6.5%	23.7%
Radio	1	0.7%	2.6%
Television	3	2.2%	7.9%
Other (Communication channels)	2	1.4%	5.3%
Total	138	100.0%	363.2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

I consider that participating in the youth program has had a positive impact in my life.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	32	84.2	84.2	84.2
	Agree	5	13.2	13.2	97.4
	Disagree	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	31	81.6	81.6	81.6
	Agree	6	15.8	15.8	97.4
	Strongly disagree	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	38	100.0	100.0	

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
I consider that participating in the youth program has had a positive impact in my life.	Female	22	1.136	.3513	.0749	.981	1.292	1.0	2.0
	Male	16	1.313	.7932	.1983	.890	1.735	1.0	4.0
	Total	38	1.211	.5769	.0936	1.021	1.400	1.0	4.0
I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program.	Female	22	1.182	.3948	.0842	1.007	1.357	1.0	2.0
	Male	16	1.375	1.0247	.2562	.829	1.921	1.0	5.0
	Total	38	1.263	.7235	.1174	1.025	1.501	1.0	5.0

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I consider that participating in the youth program has had a positive impact in my life.	Between Groups	.287	1	.287	.860	.360
	Within Groups	12.028	36	.334		
	Total	12.316	37			
I would recommend other youth participating in a similar program.	Between Groups	.346	1	.346	.654	.424
	Within Groups	19.023	36	.528		
	Total	19.368	37			

